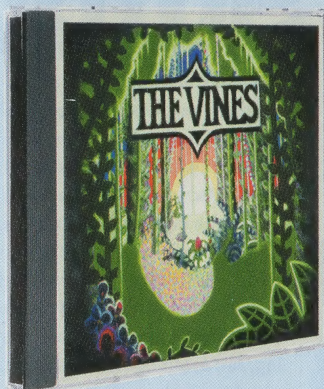


IN BLOOM: The Vines bring great songs and perfect hair back to rock.

By JEFF APTER



The Vines

Highly Evolved

HEAVENLY/EMI

LIKE FIRST LOVES, FIRST ALBUMS are supposed to be messy and thrilling and dumb and, ideally, unforgettable. *Highly Evolved*, the debut LP from Sydney rockers the Vines — whose rapid, unstoppable rise from a suburban garage to “Beatles meets Nirvana” raps is straight out of rock mythology — meets all the criteria for great debuts. Like Nirvana’s *Bleach* or the Manic Street Preachers’ *Generation Terrorists*, even Silverchair’s *Frogstomp*, this is an album that grabs a moment in time. In the Vines’ case, they’re riding high on the back-to-rockin’-basics zeitgeist that has made the Strokes, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, the Hives and the White Stripes new millennium leaders.

Oh yeah, the songs. *Highly Evolved* is a fast, sharp, smart, sometimes schizoid effort, a record whose mood swings veer between the furious to the woozily psychedelic. The opener, UK Top 40 hit “Highly Evolved”, is a 90-second statement of intent; it’s pure punk-pop fury, frontman and tunesmith Craig Nicholls shaking his floppy fringe and screaming his lungs Barnesy-raw. But within two minutes, the album is riding high on the friendly sky, as “Autumn Shade” drifts off into the stratosphere, smiling beatifically. The rest of *Highly Evolved* staggers between the two extremes: “Outta the Way” and current single, “Get Free”, are frenetic ravers, with Nicholls giving his larynx a fearful battering. “In the Jungle” has an each-way bet, with its stop-start breakdown, while “Factory” slips into a cool faux-reggae stomp. Meanwhile, in the land of chill, “Homesick” hovers

RECORDINGS

